

EIMA 2024, a driving force for Italian-Serbian cooperation

The 46th edition of the Bologna exhibition was presented this morning in Novi Sad (Serbia) during a conference on agricultural robots. High automation technologies strategic to increase the productivity of an increasingly specialised agricultural economy like Serbia. High innovation at the heart of EIMA 2024, which inaugurates the REAL area dedicated to testing and practical demonstrations of robots.

Serbia has great agricultural potential, especially in the field of fruit and vegetable cultivation, but to fully exploit it it must increase the competitiveness of the primary sector through investments in state-of-the-art mechanical equipment. This is the message launched by the conference entitled "Agriculture 5.0 – Innovations in sustainable agriculture", which took place on Monday, 20 May in the framework of the international fair in Novi Sad. Organised by the Belgrade ICE office, the event was moderated by Mirela Mitrić, desk editor of RTV Vojvodina Agricultural and was attended by the Italian ambassador to Serbia Luca Gori, the director of the Belgrade ICE Antonio Ventresca, the president of FederUnacoma Mariateresa Maschio and the advisor of the Ministry for European Integration Danilo Golubović, who opened the work by stressing the strategic importance of technical cooperation and trade relations between Serbia and Italy. Fabio Ricci, deputy director of FederUnacoma; Marko Oscar, head of the Centre for Information Technologies; Jelena Nestorov, President of the Union of Vojvodina Cooperatives; Marija Antanasković, Secretary General of the Association of Agricultural Machinery Importers and Exporters; Lazar Turšijan, of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Novi Sad, expert in¹ precision agriculture; Stefan Gligorić, Secretary General of the New Generation Farmers Association; and Dejan Zorić of the agromechanical company AgroTECH, focused on the topics of high automation for the primary sector.

In his speech, the deputy director of FederUnacoma highlighted the commercial boom of autonomous agricultural robots, used today mainly for weeding, seeding and harvesting operations. "The 'intelligent' machines do not represent more a frontier technology, but they are more and more diffuse mechanical means, than - Ricci has explained - they are turning out irreplaceable for their ability to increase the yields and to improve the sustainability, the healthiness as well as the profitability of the agricultural productions. The global market for agricultural robots, which had already grown by 22.7% in 2023 (from \$11 billion to \$13.5 billion), is expected to triple in the next five years to reach a value of \$40.1 billion".

Robotics applied to agriculture will be the focus of the next edition of EIMA International 2024, the world exhibition of agricultural mechanics, scheduled in Bologna from 6 to 10 November and which has always been characterised by the contents of high innovation. In addition to numerous conferences, seminars and workshops of a technical nature, which will take stock of the various issues related to high automation systems, the upcoming EIMA also inaugurates an outdoor space in the Bologna exhibition centre, the Real area, dedicated precisely to tests and practical demonstrations of autonomous agricultural robots. Innovation in the foreground also in the Digital hall (together with the EIMA Green, EIMA Components, EIMA Energy and EIMA Idrotech halls is one of the five specialised halls in which the trade fair is divided), showcase of cutting-edge digital technologies, and in the traditional static display of the models awarded at the Technical Innovations competition. "For the primary sector of the Balkan country, which expresses a significant demand for the latest generation of machinery, EIMA

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International is therefore an event of definite interest. With more than 50,000 models on display representing 14 product sectors, the Bologna event – Ricci added – is able to satisfy every need of the Serbian agricultural economy which, as is well known, is focusing heavily not only on arable crops but also on crops with high added value.” In this perspective, the Bologna event is an important opportunity to strengthen technical cooperation between Serbia and Italy, which is already solid in the mechanical engineering sector. With an export value of more than 32 million euros, Italy in 2023 was the second largest supplier of mechanical equipment for agriculture, just after Germany (61 million euros). Tractors (17 million); equipment for sowing, transplanting and fertilising (3.2 million); harvesting equipment (3.1 million euros) are the types of Italian machinery most in demand by farmers in the Balkan country. The forecasts of FederUnacoma confirm the interest of the Serbian agricultural world in the Bologna event and in Italian agromechanics. According to the Federation, the influx of qualified buyers and operators from Serbia should confirm the incremental trend of the last four editions, when their number more than doubled, from 860 in 2016 to about 2,000 in 2022.

At the end of his speech, the deputy director of FederUnacoma stressed the optimism of the organisers for the success of EIMA 2024. “To date, more than 1,600 industries in the sector, 500 of them foreign, have already formalised their application to participate. From 6 to 10 November, 330,000 visitors are expected at the Bologna exhibition centre, 57,000 of them foreigners representing 150 countries. The group of highly qualified operators, composed of 450 foreign delegates from 80 countries, whose incoming is being organised by the ICE Agency, is also very large,” concluded Ricci.

The EIMA International road show that, before Novi Sad, had stopped in Azerbaijan in Baku (“Italy and Azerbaijan together for better food production”, this is the title of the initiative) will continue in the coming weeks with a busy calendar of dedicated² events that will touch, among others, markets of great importance for our industry such as Canada, the United States and Poland.

Novi Sad, 20 May 2024

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